/23 cont./

608 565 peasants also rear the children of clergymen, of merchants, and even of other peasants. There are also cases of even nobles taking in and rearing the sons of strong and influential princes on the same basis.

IV.

Marriage

583 Some fifteen years ago the groom usually abducted a girl for a wife; that is to say, without the consent of the girl's parents or her own consent, he carried out an attack upon her with the help of his comrades and led her away by force. Such cases are rare nowadays. On the contrary, abductions are now for the greater part carried out with the consent of the bride herself, though not infrequently against the will of her parents. In the latter case, the one chosen as a bride comes at night to a previously arranged place a few versts from the parental home. The groom comes to the same place with his comrades, on horses. She mounts a horse brought especially for her, and the whole cavalcade gallops back to the home of the groom or to that of some influential person. No pursuers are able to take the bride away from the abductors, for they are prepared, if necessary, to fight to the last drop of blood for her. Soon after the abduction the girl herself announces publicly that the abduction took place according to her personal wishes and that she can be happy only with her abductor. Mutual negotiations are now [584] initiated and everything ends in peace; the son-in-law brings presents to the mother and the father of the bride, and the case is closed.

584 583 It must be noted that the Abkhaz never abducts a girl lower in standing than himself. This would be considered a loss of [558] honor for the abductor. On the contrary, everybody tries to abduct a girl of higher or at least equal birth. To propose to a [154] girl and to receive a refusal either from her or from her parents